

PAM,
AFRICA ✓

East

American Board of Commissioners for
Foreign Missions.

THE

East Central African Mission.

A CONDENSED SKETCH.

1880-1886.

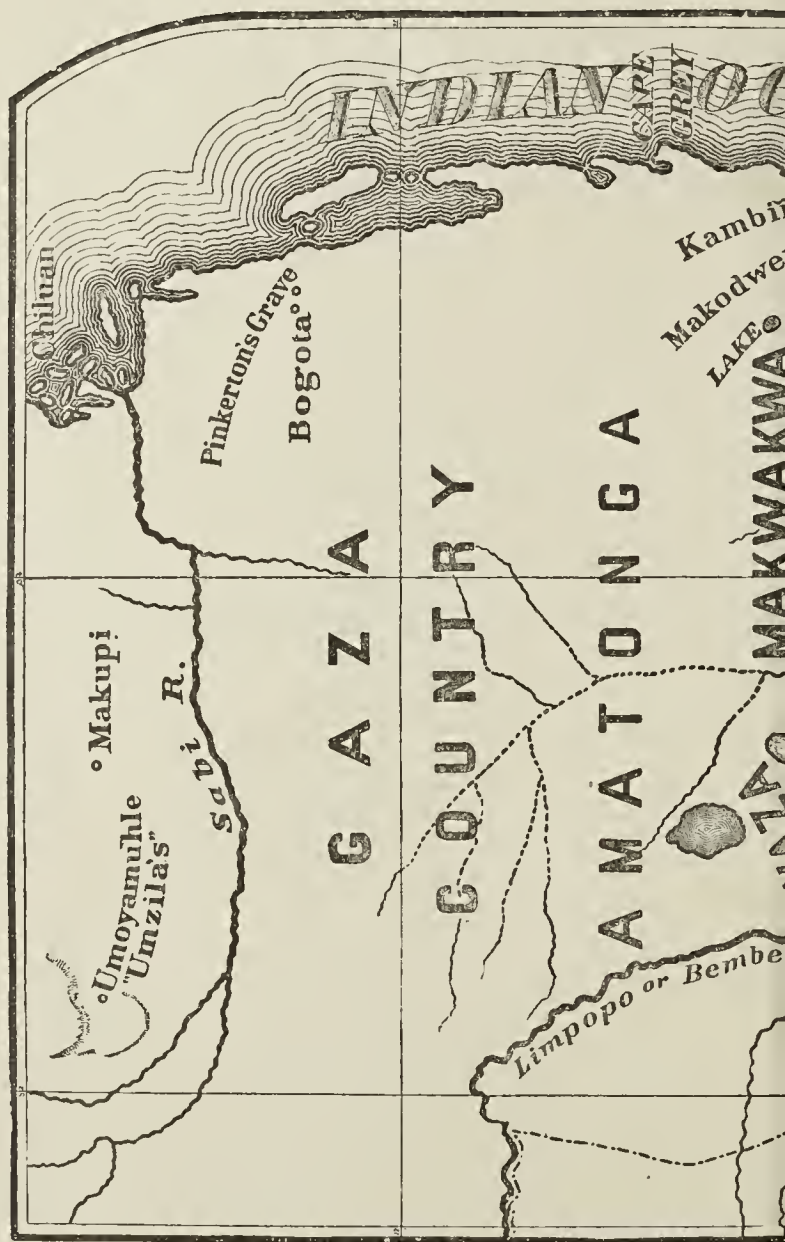
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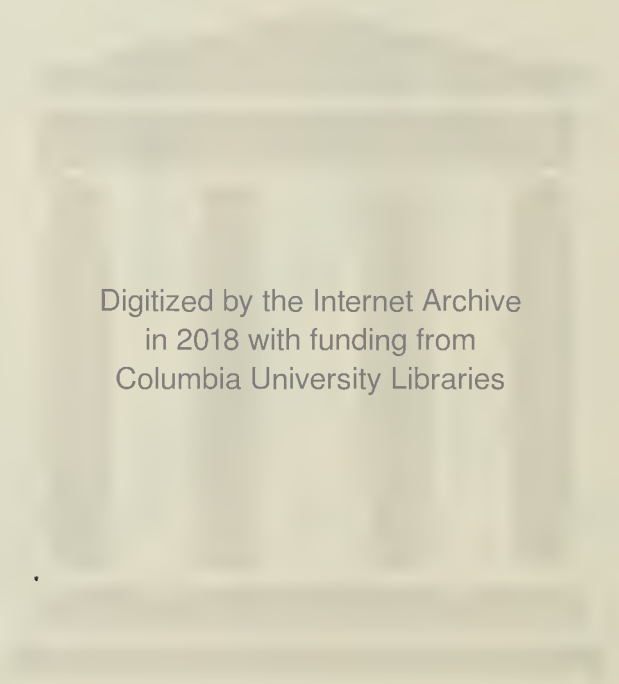
1886. .

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CONDENSED SKETCH OF THE EAST CENTRAL AFRICAN MISSION.

THIS mission is at once the foreign missionary enterprise of the Zulu Mission in Natal and an independent movement to reach the tribes in the interior of Africa with the gospel. The following statement in respect to the plans of the Board in beginning missionary operations in Southern Africa appears in the Annual Report for the year 1834: —

“The Committee have made arrangements for commencing a mission among the Zulus of Southeastern Africa, and for commencing it simultaneously in the two separate communities into which that people is at present divided. It is expected that the mission will embark near the close of the present year, and that each branch of it will consist of two ministers of the gospel and a physician, with their wives. The part which is destined for the maritime community, situated between Port Natal and Delagoa Bay, and under the government of Dingaan, will

probably be landed at Port Natal. The other community is situated behind this, in the interior, and is governed by a chief called Mosalekatsi. The part of the mission designed for this people must go by the way of Cape Town. The Zulus all speak the same language, and till recently were under the same head."

The mission to the Zulus in Southern Africa thus began fifty years ago at two points, one in Natal called the *maritime* mission, and the other in the heart of the continent about two degrees south of the Tropic of Capricorn, called the *interior* mission. And although the latter was abandoned as soon as begun, in consequence of wars between the Dutch boers and the natives, from an early day in its history the Zulu Mission has cherished this hope with which it was planted, and has cast its eyes upon the regions beyond Natal, in Zululand and the Gaza Country, northeast of the Limpopo River, and Matebeleland, as a field to which its labors might at some time extend. This territory is occupied by tribes kindred to the natives of Natal; and the Zulu tongue is either the vernacular or is generally understood. The hope has been cherished that the native Christians would be drawn into this work, and thus the expansive impulse of a real foreign missionary effort be added to the forces

which were developing the mission churches. Various projects looking to this end have been considered from time to time ; but political complications and scanty numbers in the mission staff and a certain lack of zeal among the natives combined to prevent any active movement for many years.

At length, with the impulse given to our knowledge of Central Africa and its peoples, and to missionary zeal in their behalf, especially by the explorations of Livingstone and Stanley, this long-cherished purpose awoke to new strength and preliminary steps were taken. In the Annual Meeting of the Zulu Mission for 1879 the matter was taken up in earnest, thoroughly considered, and a plan of operations adopted. Rev. Myron W. Pinkerton, one of the younger members of the mission, was authorized to make explorations in Umzila's kingdom, between the Limpopo and the Zambezi, with reference to the proposed new mission. After careful preparations he set out July 8, 1880, with one American and one Christian native. The expedition was wisely planned ; great kindness and help were received from the Portuguese authorities ; and everything seemed to promise success, when suddenly Mr. Pinkerton was prostrated by fever, and died on Novem-

ber 10, and was buried on the way from the sea to Umzila's kraal.

The next year Rev. E. H. Richards was sent by the Zulu Mission to take up the task of exploration where Mr. Pinkerton had laid it down. Umzila's kraal, the capital of the kingdom, was reached October 10, 1881, without special incident; and, after a full conference with the king, the desired permission was given to open the new mission whenever the Americans should choose to come. It was ascertained that Zulu was the court language, and was generally understood even by the tribes tributary to Umzila, whose vernacular was a dialect kindred to the Zulu.

In November, 1882, Rev. William C. Wilcox, designated to assist Mr. Richards in opening the new mission, requested permission to go forward alone and explore the region around Inhambane Bay. He found eligible sites for mission premises, great numbers of people easily accessible, special facilities for starting a mission upon a self-supporting basis, and an earnest desire on the part of the natives to learn to read. Permission was given to begin the new mission at this point, with the expectation that after due exploration and the arrival of needful reinforcements a steady advance would be made toward

the tribes in the interior. Mr. Wilcox, with his family, went forward in July, 1883, to establish the mission, which has since received the name of the East Central African Mission. During this first year Mr. Wilcox opened a school and maintained regular evangelistic services, studied the people, the language, the climate, and laid a good foundation for the work that was to follow. Mr. Richards, with his family, joined him there in July, 1884; and in December of the same year Rev. and Mrs. Benjamin F. Ousley arrived to recruit the mission. It is an interesting fact that Mr. Ousley was born a slave in the household of Mr. Joseph Davis, brother of the president of the Southern Confederacy, was freed by the Emancipation Proclamation of President Lincoln, and received his education in the schools of the American Missionary Association, both he and Mrs. Ousley graduating in 1881 from Fisk University, and Mr. Ousley completing his theological studies at Oberlin.

After the arrival of Mr. Richards, explorations were carefully conducted westward to the Limpopo River, and southwest to Baleni, the second capital of Umzila's kingdom, situated on both banks of the Limpopo, some hundred miles from its mouth, and northward toward the residence of the king; and by means of these the

character of the country, the tribes that occupy it, and the opportunity for missionary labors, were ascertained. The region thus penetrated for the first time by foreign explorers, and so made in a proper sense the field of the mission, stretches five hundred miles northward along the coast from the mouth of the Limpopo River toward the Zambezi, is the natural way of approach to a vast inland territory, and seems to be thickly peopled by tribes that offer an easy access to missionary labors. The three families decided to occupy separate stations, enjoying easy communication with each other and with Inhambane Bay; and in June, 1885, Mr. Wilcox moved northward to Makodweni, Mr. Ousley to Kambini, while Mr. Richards remained at Mongwe on the bay. Four helpers from the Zulu Mission churches joined Mr. Richards this year, and entered upon missionary labor under his direction, the beginning of what it is hoped will prove a constant and important feature in the development of the mission.

The nominal restriction upon the privilege of teaching and preaching which the Portuguese authorities at first were inclined to impose was presently suffered to fall into disuse, and the missionaries were left at liberty to respond freely to the strong desire for instruction which the

natives generally manifested. They gathered into their own households as large a number of youths as they could find employment for, and combined with some stated service about the mission premises regular hours of elementary school instruction and the customary worship of a Christian family. In this way they have been able to exercise a constant and positive influence over their pupils, and the impressions made on mind and heart are much more deep and abiding. Mr. Wilcox has tried the experiment of cultivating a considerable tract of land, in order to draw a greater number of the native youths into his more immediate care, and to train them in habits of industry; and so far the plan seems to be working successfully. These young people have proved unusually bright and tractable; they conform to rules readily, acquire manual arts with rare facility, and make rapid progress in learning to read and to write. In one of these schools a young man, six weeks after he had learned the letters of the alphabet, was able to set type, and within six weeks more he could both set and distribute type, correct proof, and print with commendable accuracy. Another learned the mason's trade with equal facility, and a third the tailor's. But, best of all, at all the stations they soon seemed to understand the

gospel and to feel its claims on them and personally to yield themselves to the Saviour. At a general meeting held at Kambini on Christmas, 1885, within six months after the separate stations had been occupied, more than fifty publicly expressed their purpose to be Christians, including some from each of the station schools. And they gave practical and cheering evidence of the sincerity and steadfastness of their purpose by renouncing evil habits and heathen ornaments, and beginning to persuade their companions to faith and repentance. This number soon increased to sixty, and with a few exceptions there has been a real progress both in Christian knowledge and in Christian living. The missionaries have formed these inquirers into classes for special instruction, and in due time hope to baptize and organize them into Christian churches. Mr. Wilcox gives the following translation of the pledges assumed by each of the members of these classes : —

MY COVENANT WITH JESUS.

1. To-day I take Jesus Christ as my Saviour and my King.
2. I shall always seek to know that which Jesus likes, and to do it. I shall seek his will by prayers and by reading his Bible.

3. I renounce the customs of the heathen. I take the customs of God's people. To throw the divining-stones, to worship the ancestral spirits, to eat medicine for a man who has died, to mourn for the dead by dancing or by heathen songs, — I have renounced all.

4. I shall not practise polygamy. I will seek for one wife who wishes to believe. I shall teach my wife and my children to believe in Jesus. I will not barter away a child of mine, nor of a relation.

5. I give up everything which defiles my body — tobacco, strong drink, hemp, and fornication. I shall imitate God's people in all countries in my giving.

The languages of these peoples have been studied and to some fair degree mastered; portions of the Scriptures have been translated; a catechism of 120 questions and answers has been printed; and some very simple lessons in reading have been issued from the mission press. The schools are large and the attendance fairly regular; and some of the brightest of the pupils will soon be ready to act as teachers to their own people. A good beginning has thus been made, and the immediate prospect is unusually encouraging. When properly reinforced the

mission may extend its work to the regions beyond, and a regular line of stations toward the heart of the continent be opened.

MEMBERS OF THE MISSION IN 1886.

| | | |
|---------------------------|-------|------------|
| Rev. Erwin H. Richards . | 1881. | Mongwe. |
| Mrs. Mittie A. Richards . | 1881. | |
| Rev. William C. Wilcox . | 1881. | Makodweni. |
| Mrs. Ida B. Wilcox . . | 1881. | |
| Rev. Benjamin F. Ousley . | 1884. | Kambini. |
| Mrs. Henrietta Ousley . . | 1884. | |